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Letter dated 9 October 1995 from the Permanent Representative of Morocco to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

I have the honour to transmit herewith a letter from the Contact Group on the situation in Sanjak of the Organization of the Islamic Conference.

I should be grateful if you would have this letter circulated as a document of the General Assembly, under agenda item 112, and of the Security Council.

(Signed) Ahmed SNOUSSI
Ambassador
Permanent Representative

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Annex

[Original: English]

Letter dated 9 October 1995 from the Chairman of the Organization of the Islamic Conference Contact Group on Bosnia and Herzegovina

In my capacity as the Chairman of the Organization of the Islamic Conference Contact Group on Bosnia and Herzegovina (OICCG), I have the honour to inform you that the contact group met in New York on 15 September 1995 to discuss the situation in Sanjak, and has authorized me to convey the following to your attention.

The OICCG, having recently met with a delegation from the Muslim National Council of Sanjak, expresses its grave concern at the sinister Serbian practice of continuing and systematic expulsion of the Muslim population of Sanjak with the aim of forcibly altering the demographic composition of the region by settling Serbian refugees from Croatia in this area. According to the delegation's report 1,500 Serbians from Croatia have begun to be resettled in Novi Pazar and 1,000 are expected to be resettled in Senica with more expected, causing the native population of these areas to be forcibly evicted from their ancestral homes.

The territory of Sanjak is geographically situated in the Balkan peninsula in such a way that it is in fact a land bridge between Bosnia and Herzegovina on the one side and Kosovo on the other. Bosniac Muslims, indigenous to the region, make up the majority of the population of Sanjak. Historically, these Bosniac Muslim people have the same roots and strong ties to their ancestral motherland of Bosnia and Herzegovina, which they had been physically part of for several centuries. As of this date the exact nature of their existence and status as a people remain unresolved.

While the world has only come to know of the genocidal euphemism "ethnic cleansing" recently, the Bosniac Muslim people of Sanjak, like their brethren in Bosnia and Herzegovina, have been its victims for many, many years. In recent times, or more precisely since the war of aggression began in neighbouring Bosnia and Herzegovina, Sanjak has been under direct military occupation by the Serbian-Montenegrin armed forces (both military and paramilitary). These forces have conducted a calculated and systematic campaign of terror and oppression against the civilian population of Sanjak. Examples of these heinous acts to date have included illegal arrest, detention and torture of many of Sanjak's democratically elected leadership, illegal search and seizure of property, assaulting of civilians, fire bombing of homes, and conscription of young men, often under the age of 17, into Serbian military service, where they are often sent over the border and forced to fight their fellow Bosniac Muslim people. War is in fact taking place in Sanjak, although there has not been a formal declaration by the Serbian-Montenegrin political/military authorities. The ongoing aggression and terrorism by the military authorities has to date resulted in from 70,000 to 75,000 fleeing their homes to Europe in fear for their very lives; 220 Bosniac Muslims killed, abducted or disappeared;

347 different buildings damaged including 76 family houses that have been set on fire or mined and 177 that have been damaged; 33 business premises completely destroyed and 43 damaged; 3 mosques completely destroyed and 14 mosques damaged; 45 Bosniac Muslim village settlements completely "ethnically cleansed" in the regions of Priboj and Pljevlja; 16,700 Bosniac Muslims subjected to some form of police harassment/abuse including beatings, illegal detention and even torture while in police custody.

In the light of the aforementioned facts and to stem the tide of ever-increasing numbers of human rights violations in the region of Sanjak, the following concrete steps must be taken:

(1) The Serbian-Montenegrin government must be told in no uncertain terms to put an immediate end to the illegal practices of their armed forces and police, in particular arbitrary arrests, illegal search and seizure, the taking of political prisoners, as well as all other forms of terror and oppression used against the civilian population of Sanjak.

(2) The International Conference on the Former Yugoslavia in Geneva along with the United Nations and European Union representatives must begin earnest discussions on resolving the status of the Bosniacs of Sanjak and that of all the Bosniac Muslims of the "rump" Yugoslavia who have remained statusless since 27 April 1992 when they were officially expunged from the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia.

(3) Pressure must be brought to bear on Belgrade to remove any and all obstacles to the return of the observers of the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe to Sanjak, Kosovo and Vojvodina in keeping with Security Council resolution 855 (1993). In addition, these observers should be granted a broader mandate under which they could be more effective in monitoring and preventing human rights violations in these regions.

OICCG reiterates hopes that due and urgent consideration will be given to the contents of this letter.

(Signed) Ahmed SNOUSSI
Ambassador
Permanent Representative
Chairman of the OIC Contact Group

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